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ABSTRACT

In the writing classroom, the instructor appears to be the mediator, recognizing the contributions of each required text and of each student, whether in class discussions or written assignments. Undergraduate college students usually regard mediating in whatever style as the instructor's task, not their own. But in the research paper assignment, the student must mediate. When students become student writers, each must relate with several, even numerous, others at once and also influence those others' relations with each other. A diagram illustrates the complex web of relationships between the student and her teachers, her research sources, her audience and her research participants. Many scholars who look at undergraduate research papers restrict their attention to one aspect of relationships with published sources, the rules for avoiding plagiarism, but this concern alone is not enough. The relationship with other writers also includes the responsibility not to distort or demean the written work of others. Students must also consider a code of ethics in the relationships they form to those that they are researching--their research participants; the student research paper today often involves interviews with sources in person. Finally, the student's relationship to his/her audience usually begins with the teacher. A teacher who is responsible in relating to published sources and caring in mediating among student voices in the classroom can serve as a model. (Contains 36 references.) (TB)

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The Undergraduate Research Paper: Teaching Ethical Relationships

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ON MEDIATING

It is a principle in folklore that common jokes and tales get told with locally interesting names and settings, so that a story is told one time about Stonewall Jackson and another time about the Pope. There is a story I have heard twice, once as a Vietnamese folk tale and once as a story about a rabbi. In Vietnam the story is called "The Mandarin of the Three Yes's" and goes like this.

> There was a mandarin who was thought to be the wisest person in his district. Two peasants went to see him for advice because each had a claim about a section of river bank. "I should be able to fish at that rock because I have fished there since I was a child, and my mother fished there before me. It has been the rule that a family can keep its fishing place from generation to generation," said the First Peasant.
>
> "Yes, you are right," said the Mandarin.
>
> The Second Peasant said, "I should be able to fish at that rock because I live along the riverbank there, and I need fish to feed my three children."
>
> "Yes, you are right," said the Mandarin.
>
> A third peasant who overheard the conversation became exasperated and said, "Mandarin, they can't both be right."
>
> "Yes, you also are right," said the Mandarin.

The mandarin in the story is in the role of mediator. He must relate with several others at once and also influence their relations with each other. His task is to recognize the justice in contradictory claims and also to recognize the third claim that neither of the opposing positions, nor his own recognition of them,

is finished, complete, absolutely right. This is the claim of the third peasant. In another tale, Kenneth Burke's "Epilogue: Prologue in Heaven," the third peasant's line is spoken by TL, "The Lord," who demonstrates how, at any point in a discussion or dialectic, someone can say, and rightly, that "It's more complicated than that" (277 and throughout).

MEDIATION IN THE WRITING CLASS

In the writing classroom, the instructor appears to be the mediator, recognizing the contributions of each required text and of each student, whether in class discussion or written assignments. As James Sosnowski points out, this mediating does not always take the form of recognizing contributions; it has sometimes been dominated by a negative tone, as if the pedagogue were a mandarin of the three no's rather than the three yes's, saying "You are wrong," "You are wrong," and "You also are wrong" to each quoted voice in the textbook and to each student. This kind of mediation might be described as a "quality control" model, protecting the field from shoddy products of thinking or writing.

Nel Noddings describes another model of mediating in the classroom "arising out of both ancient notions of agapism and contemporary feminism," (215) in which teachers, like caring parents, work to "produce acceptable persons" (221). She describes a situated, relational ethic which replaces the "supremely lonely and heroic ethical agent" (219) of Kantian ethics with a "relational ethics" of "human beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relations to each other" (220).

Undergraduate college students usually regard mediating in

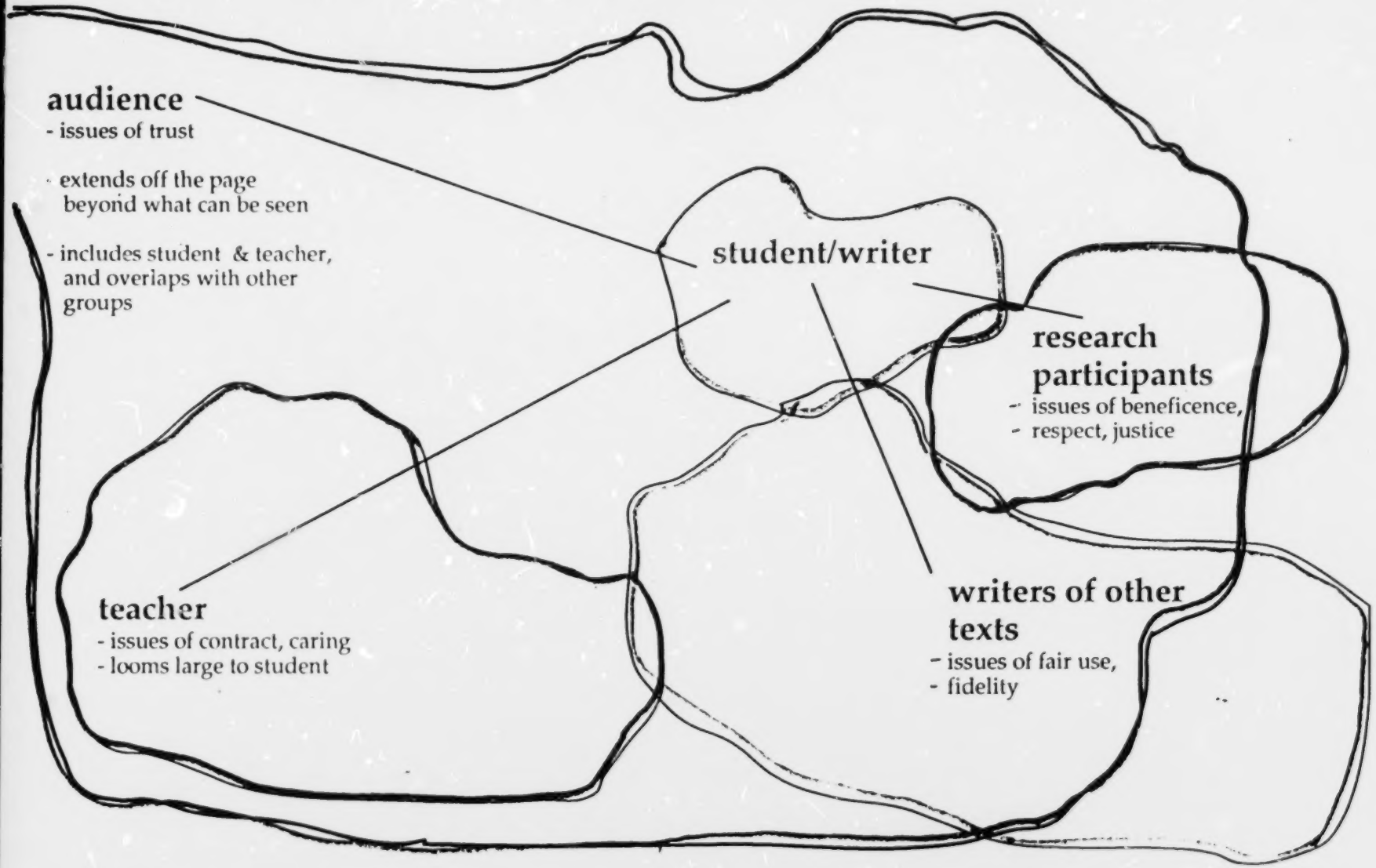
whatever style as the instructor's task, not their own. But in the research paper assignment, the student must mediate. When students become student/writers, each must relate with several, even numerous, others at once and also influence those others' relations with each other.

DIAGRAM OF THE STUDENT/WRITER'S RELATIONSHIPS

Figure 1 maps ways student/writers of research papers relate through discourse with a web of others, including other writers whose work they have used, research participants, and members of the audience, including the teacher. In each specific set of relationships, student/writers are challenged to find ways to mediate ethically within their particular context. The student/writer appears near the center of the diagram. Like each component of the diagram, the student/writer is signified by an amoeba shape which can be imagined as shifting in shape and extension over time.

Another amoeba signifies the writers with whom the student/writer interacts through their texts. In these relationships, ethical issues of fair use and fidelity (avoidance of distortion) arise. This amoeba is quite large because this set of relationships has loomed large for students themselves and for scholars in the field of composition who write about the undergraduate research paper. In this diagram, the amoebas can overlap. In a double relationship, the teacher, some research participants, and even the student/writer may also be included in the group of cited writers if the student/writer uses texts they have produced.

When students are writing research papers, they are involved in webs of relationships which imply responsibilities.


audience
- issues of trust
- extends off the page beyond what can be seen
- includes student & teacher, and overlaps with other groups
student/writer
research participants
- issues of beneficence,
- respect, justice
teacher
- issues of contract, caring
- looms large to student
writers of other texts
- issues of fair use,
- fidelity

Haas - Figure 1

The boundaries of these amoeba shapes should be imagined as shifting with time, often overlapping.
The shapes would be different for each specific instance of student writing.

Molly Haas, Purdue University, CCCC Forum, March 25, 1995

Another amoeba signifies the research participants--people who contribute to the student/writer's research directly rather than through texts. This field can overlap with any of the others. Ethical issues of beneficence, fidelity, and respect arise in these relationships, but they have received little attention in the composition field.

The largest amoeba signifies audience. It can include any of the other amoebas, and any number of other people. The boundary of the audience amoeba is open to possible extension into an area off the page. This area is invisible to the student/writer, signifying that as long as a single copy of a paper exists, the audience can always expand in unpredictable ways.

One wrinkle in the student/writer's complicated relationships with audience is that audience always includes both the student/writer and the teacher. In the diagram, the teacher amoeba appears to be larger than the student amoeba, because, from the student/writer's point of view, the teacher often dominates the audience.

Whatever other ethical responsibilities may be involved with each amoeba included in audience, the student/writer is always responsible for issues of trust, of both contract and caring, both rules and relationships. With the understanding that the groups represented in this diagram are changeable and not mutually exclusive, I would like to look more closely at the student/writer's responsibilities towards them.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH WRITERS OF OTHER TEXTS

Many scholars who look at undergraduate research papers

restrict their attention to one aspect of relationships with published sources, the rules for avoiding plagiarism (e.g., Kolich, Kroll, McCormick). University codes of ethics can be a resource for this task (McCabe and Trevino). Many writers, while not looking beyond the rules, point out the value of a caring rather than legalistic application of rules (Drum, Wells). Other writers problematize the rules themselves. It is complicated for students joining the conversation to distinguish between "good" and "bad" borrowing, not just because they are inexperienced, but also because the rules are local and subtle. The students' instructors don't always cite their sources in lectures (Alexander) and the genres outside academic discourse with which the student is familiar, newspaper and magazine articles, only occasionally list sources at the end of a piece and often do not cite at all (Jameson). Brookes also points out that students who fail to observe the conventions of documentation are often not simply breaking rules but following "different rules, many of which spring from values they share within groups outside the classroom." (31) As Howard points out, students working in the unfamiliar genre of academic research attempt to translate sources, often attempting to be intertextual without enough texts (Howard). In these analyses of the problems of student/writers, these teacher/writers are applying a principle of Noddings' relational ethic, the principle of "confirming" in which one attributes to the other the "best possible motive consonant with reality" (224). Such confirming is aimed at encouraging the student/writer to engage in the complex relationships within the writing task.

Students may not see these relationships as their teachers see

them. Some student/writers' problems with the conventions of documentation can be traced to an impoverished view of their relationship with their sources. Students may view their own ideas as negligible and see their task as assembling scraps of "material" from authorities, rather than relating with sources and audience (Whitaker). An overly deferential attitude to authority (Wells) or a dogmatic attachment to the security of certain texts (Foster) can slow down the student's assuming of the role of mediator. In their own relationship with students, teachers need to foreground with student/writers the "paradoxical blend of conformity and independent thought" (Foster, 35) which is required in the research paper.

Concern for fair use of other writers' work is not enough. The relationship with other writers also includes the responsibility not to distort or demean their work. Student/writers are more likely to misread and thus distort source material if they see research as a search for corroboration for some view they already hold, rather than as a process of genuine inquiry (Slattery). The problem of demeaning other writers' work, is in some ways a problem of relationship. Paradoxically, like the problem of gathering material without relating with it, destructive use of other writers' material can stem from too much deference. Student/writers don't always see their own discourse as having any power for good or ill, so they may resort to a discourse of "humiliation" (Sosnowski) of some other writer without taking their practice seriously. Student/writers may see published writers as invulnerable, and themselves as harmless. The teacher may deal with this problem by foregrounding the student/writers'

relationship with the other writers. However, addressing these obstacles is complicated by the fact that the ethical development of students in a class is not uniform, with some more open than others to taking responsibility beyond conformity to authorities and rules (see Kohlberg).

RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The student research paper was once commonly called "the library paper." In fact, James Berlin points out that libraries lead to research papers, that the research paper was added to the curriculum with the improved libraries and indexing systems of the 1920's and 30's (70). But undergraduate research is no longer exclusively library research. Teachers report an increased use of student projects which emphasize "real world" or empirical research, often interviews or questionnaires (e.g., Cooper). How do students learn to do this research, to engage in these relationships ethically? There is some material on the legal requirements involved in relationships with research participants in the field of composition, but it addresses itself to research conducted by professionals rather than by undergraduate students (e.g., Lauer and Asher). Lacking within the composition field is emphasis on developing student/writers' awareness of both legal requirements and broader ethical concerns involved in researchers' relationships with participants as they undertake research. Some resources are available from the fields of anthropology, education, sociology and psychology.

As in the teaching of ethical documentation practices, one resource for the teaching of ethical conduct in research is to

refer to systems of rules. Professional societies in the social sciences compose codes for research with human participants. For example, the American Psychological Society's code is frequently cited. It has not been updated since 1982, although a new version was due in 1994. Important elements of this code include concern about "human welfare" as well as the advancement of "science," the need for "a clear and fair agreement with research participants prior to their participation" (5), and the importance of confidentiality of findings (6).

The rules are valuable, but not sufficient. Researchers point out the limitations of code-based practice, which tends to serve the needs of the researchers or their sponsoring institutions rather than the needs of the participants (Batchelor and Briggs; Homan; Noddings, 226-229). The researcher must mediate, applying the rules within the relationships which are part of research. Brickhouse explicitly advocates fleshing out the bare bones of the rules with an attitude of caring toward participants (2). She calls for ongoing communication with participants, whose privacy is at risk. Consent forms are filled out before the real situation develops, before it is clear how the research will go (4). This consent in advance, sufficient for complying with the rules, is "necessary but not sufficient" (5) for caring for research participants. Brickhouse cites Lincoln and Guba's "principle of no surprise": if the researcher's ongoing communication has been adequate, the participant should be satisfied after the research has been completed (8).

The student/writer's work with human subjects may seem risk-free if it does not involve the possibility of physical or

psychological injury during the research process itself. However, as Brickhouse points out, "the greatest possibility of harm occurs with dissemination of the findings and inadvertent violation of confidentiality" (6). Part of the teacher's task is to encourage the awareness that language, including student discourse, is powerful and must be handled with care in caring relationships.

This is true not only for other research participants but for the student as participant in her own research, the situation both in the research paper and in other genres common to composition classes where first-person accounts are written. (Note the overlap between student/writer and research participants in the diagram.) Moore and Klein recount a sobering sample case: Moore, a student/writer, lost her job when she confided to a fellow-worker that she was writing a paper about their workplace, a bar near the State Capitol of Arkansas. The coworker mentioned this at a party and the resulting rumors caused the bar owners to fire Moore. Klein was Moore's writing teacher. Klein has since incorporated cautions for students in his assignments and has examined the implications of his power as a writing instructor (389-393). Moore stresses that the behavior she wrote about was "public" and therefore she had a "right" to write about it. She admits that she "knew a public statement would put my job at risk, so I wrote a paper for a class as an outlet for my frustration; and I wrote it in a university writing situation, one I believed to be safe and benign" (384). Klein also believed the class situation to be "safe" for students because he had experienced institutional support for his own freedom as a researcher. Both Klein and Moore express frustration with what they see as the failure of the rules

to prevent harm, and both wish for a change in the rules. It would be interesting if these two, with their knowledge of their particular local situation, would examine whether the application of an ethic of caring would illuminate their interpretation of what happened; however, their discussion remains legalistic.

RELATIONSHIP TO AUDIENCE, INCLUDING THE TEACHER

How does the student/writer begin to mediate responsibilities toward the audience? The relationship with the writing teacher is a possible beginning point. A teacher who is responsible in relating to published sources (Alexander) and caring in mediating among student voices in the classroom can serve as model. Sandra Stotsky, one of the few writers to explicitly recognize research writing as ethical praxis (see also Garver), draws attention to the role of the teacher/writer as model:

> the very instrument that scholars use to contribute to the development of knowledge--their academic writing--should itself be a model of ethical reasoning and may be their primary means for cultivating moral thinking in their students (130).

Stotsky goes on to offer a carefully developed list of principles for ethical academic writing: respect for the purposes of academic language, respect for other writers, respect for the integrity of the subject, and respect for the integrity of the reader. These principles seem to be addressed to the person Noddings would call the "supremely lonely and heroic ethical agent" (219) but, like other rules discusssed above, they would be useful if not sufficient as a reference point for "human beings involved in the

situation under consideration and their relations to each other" (Noddings, 220).

Besides serving as model for relating responsibly with an audience, the teacher forms part of the immediate audience for the student/writer. This fact can cause a problem in relating ethically with the audience. If a student/writer thinks of the teacher as the sole audience, then there seems to be no need for the student to mediate. Rules don't seem to apply because the game is already fixed. Goliath, the teacher, is heavily armed and armored, which invites the student/writer to even the odds by bending the rules, even to the point of declining the task altogether and submitting a purchased paper. Also, Goliath doesn't appear to need caring from David, the student/writer, so deception may seem acceptable. My exaggeration of the adversarial component in the teacher/student relationship does suggest a response for the teacher: expand the audience. Many teachers include members of the class in each student/writer's real audience. In addition, I have found it useful to encourage student/writers to plan to make research participants part of their audience from the beginning, to agree to give participants copies of the finished research paper. Awareness of this aspect of audience during the period of direct contact can help sensitize the student/writer to the responsibilities of representing the participant in discourse, the responsibilities to do no harm, not to distort, to be respectful and to observe confidentiality. Sometimes the writers of other texts can only be included in the student/writer's audience by a sort of "thought experiment": "How would I write this summary if I knew it would be read by the author of the article?" Responsibility

in this relationship can sometimes be encouraged by analogy with the relationship to face-to-face research participants. An audience expanded by thought experiment is not so outlandish in light of audience theory which suggests that a writer's audience is always in some ways a fiction, something evoked, more complicated than we thought (Ede and Lunsford, Ong, Park, Porter). If student/writers see their situation as one in which writers of works cited, research participants, and anyone else who might be interested in the subject are members of the audience, this can lend immediacy to the ethical demands of the writing task.

CONCLUSION

What happens when the student/writer becomes a mandarin who must mediate? Here we leave the boundaries of the folk tale with which we began. It was hardly more than a proverb about ethical ambiguity. The student, who has been listening to the folk tale, imagining herself one of the peasants, maybe raising her voice to offer a perspective, maybe sitting silently, falls asleep and dreams. She finds herself to be sitting in the Mandarin's chair. The old mandarin, the regular mandarin, the teacher, has required this move. It isn't a case of "The mandarin is dead; long live the mandarin," however, for the old mandarin stays in the room, sometimes participating, sometimes silent, but always observing. How messy! And who are the peasants? This is messy too. There are no longer only two, but many. They fill the room. And some of them seem to be mandarins as well (since they raise their voices by publication). As in a dream, the scene shifts, but no one expresses surprise. The mandarin's room becomes the Burkean parlor

where a parlor game is going on in which many people take turns as mandarin and as peasant. Then the parlor becomes even more surreal, beyond the constraints of time, a vastly large yet intimate space in which everyone is mandarin/peasant and everyone can speak and be heard. This is the Habermasian meeting room. When the student awakens, with many voices still in her ears, she hasn't finished the research paper. How will she mediate? If both peasants can't fish from the same rock at the same time, what is to be done? How does she respect the rules and meet her responsibilities to these peasants that she knows. She must encourage the peasants to continue to talk with her and with each other, and with other peasants she invites into the room, and then she must develop her response in the context of all those relationships. It's a demanding task, but she must negotiate it. It's her turn to be mandarin.

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